



**Thames Valley Council for Community Action, Inc. (TVCCA)  
Testimony to the Aging Committee  
Regarding HB6394- AN ACT INCREASING FUNDING FOR ELDERLY  
NUTRITION  
February 5th, 2015**

Good morning Senator Flexer, Representative Serra, and members of the Aging Committee, my name is Timothy Grills and I am the Director of Nutrition Services for Thames Valley Council for Community Action (TVCCA) and part of the statewide Connecticut Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Providers (CANASP) of Elderly Nutrition Programs (ENPs). I am here today to offer testimony **in favor of HB6394- AN ACT INCREASING FUNDING FOR ELDERLY NUTRITION.**

The Meals on Wheels Association of America states that nearly 83,000 Connecticut seniors struggle daily with hunger. The Center for American Progress recently estimated that hunger increased the costs of illness each year in the U.S. by \$130.5 billion. Much of this price tag accrues to senior citizens. Speaking on June 19, 2013 at a U.S. Senate hearing on senior hunger and poverty, President & CEO of the Meals on Wheels Association, Ellie Hollander, cited recent studies that concluded for every \$1 invested in elderly nutrition programs there is a \$50 savings in Medicaid alone.

Last year, the legislature increased the meal rate 1%, or 4 cents per meal. This was the first increase in funding for elderly nutrition since 2007. The Connecticut Home Care program currently reimburses \$4.84 for a single meal and \$8.85 for two meals delivered.

**We need a single meal rate of \$6.60 and a double meals rate of \$10.40 to continue serving our elderly.**

Even with the 1% increase, our program and every other CANASP program loses money on every meal it serves in the Connecticut Home Care Program. We lose an average of \$1.44 per meal delivered.

Connecticut increased its minimum wage beginning this year. The minimum wage will increase 10% from the current \$9.15 rate by 2017. You cannot expect the ENPs to keep delivering meals with a 4 cent increase. While we recognize that the increase is better

than a cut, our costs to administer the program have gone up dramatically. The price of food continues to rise, the cost of labor and miles driven to our most rural seniors rises each year and yet this Legislature gives us a 4 cent increase.

While we continuously work to find creative ways of bringing in money, such as working with our community partners for grant opportunities and fundraising events, none of these potential solutions are enough to offset our costs in the Home Care Program.

The home care providers who are essential to providing the care that will allow an individual to remain at home have not seen reimbursement levels from the Connecticut Home Care Program increased to accompany the increasing costs to deliver the services in the program.

Elderly nutrition, often known as the Meals on Wheels program, is key to home care. Providing one or two meals a day to an elderly person in their home helps ensure that individuals are receiving nutritious meals while remaining in the community. But the Meals on Wheels program is more than a meal. This simple and very inexpensive service can prevent or delay more costly services such as hospitalizations and nursing home care.

Elderly nutrition programs provide peripheral benefits by having a person stop by the house each day who is able to recognize the signs of an elderly person whose health might be deteriorating, as well as something as simple as providing daily social contact. This daily "check-up" is a life line for many.

Without a rate increase, home care providers such as TVCCA may not be able to continue to provide this vital service and in the end, it will be our seniors who will suffer.

**We need a single meal rate of \$6.60 and a double meals rate of \$10.40 to continue serving our elderly.**

**We urge you to increase these reimbursement rates under the CT Home Care Program for Elders and pass House Bill HB6394- AN ACT INCREASING FUNDING FOR ELDERLY NUTRITION**

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.